

news

Tablelands girls made of tough stuff

Katherine Kokkonen

GOING in for the hard tackles and showing some fancy footwork are no challenge for a dedicated team of female footballers.

More than 20 girls from Malanda and Herberton have signed up for the Tablelanders girls rugby league team.

The Tablelanders were hard at training ahead of their clash against the Mareeba All Stars this weekend.

Herberton player Annette Pearson said she loved the social and physical aspect of the sport.

"It's something for girls to try," she said.

"It's fun, there's running and tackling and you get to meet new people."

Malanda footballer Shekira Sandy had a simple message for people who doubted girls could play rugby league.

"Just watch us first, then you can judge us," she said.

"People always think it's a boy's sport.

"You get to tackle people and that's good if you're like to be rough and are more of tom-boy."

Coach Des Pascoe encouraged people to come down and support the team.

The Tablelanders will take on the Mareeba All Stars at Davies Park, Mareeba, on Saturday at 6pm.

"It's really good for the girls because it is something they really enjoy," Pascoe said.

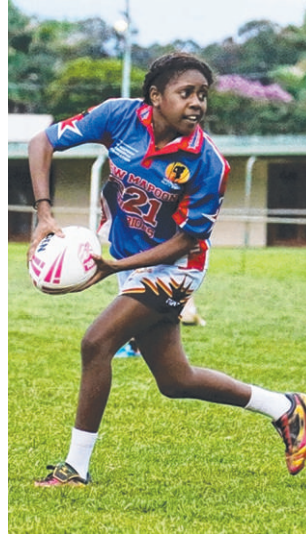
"What we need is for more spectators to come along and watch the game and encourage the girls."

NRL game development officer Rob Moore took the team through their paces with new drills during training on Tuesday night.

Moore said the Tablelanders were the best team to coach and he praised their enthusiasm.

"They're willing to learn, whereas the boys already think they know a little bit about everything," Moore said.

"The girls are like sponges.



Shirley Daniel has quick hands during training drills.

Pictures: Katherine Kokkonen

"They are so easy to coach and then they get out and they absolutely love it."

Moore said female players had the opportunity to take their passion for the sport to the next level.

Players have pathways to

represent the state and country for rugby league.

Moore said he was focused on getting girls who played rugby league in school to join up clubs.

"Club football gets them in with the whole community because it is a community game," he said.

"Last year we had a really big influx of girls through the school system and we're trying to get a lot of girls playing in clubs."

Moore praised the Malanda Eels for accepting the girls and allowing them to share resources and take part in their training sessions.

The Tablelanders will be sporting their own jerseys for the first time at this weekend's game thanks to their sponsors the Peeramon Hotel, Member for Dalrymple Shane Knuth and Pascoe's Motorcycles.

If you would like to join the Tablelanders, head to the Malanda showgrounds for training sessions on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 6pm to 7pm.



Tanishka Sagigi keeps her eye on the ball during a hard training run as coach Des Pascoe looks on.



Annette Pearson goes hard during training.



NRL game development officer Rob Moore takes the Tablelanders through their paces.



Elizabeth Thaiday is on the ball at footy training.